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Testimony before the Environment Committee

In Opposition of S.B. No. 995 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE REDUCTION OF CERTAIN LAND-BASED MARINE AND FRESHWATER DEBRIS. And in Support of S.B. No. 996 (RAISED) AN ACT ESTABLISHING A BOTTLE RECYCLING FEE IN LIEU OF A REFUNDABLE DEPOSIT.

Good Afternoon Senator Kennedy, Senator Miner and Representative Demico, and members of the Environment Committee. My name is Timmy Devanney, and I am a resident of Manchester and the owner of Highland Park Markets. We have been in business in Connecticut since 1886 and employ approximately 118 Full and 423 Part Time employees. I am here in opposition to S.B. No. 996 (RAISED) AN ACT ESTABLISHING A BOTTLE RECYCLING FEE IN LIEU OF A REFUNDABLE DEPOSIT.

Although we understand the committee's want to increase the recycling rate in CT, we feel that expanding the bottle bill is a move in the wrong direction. The bottle bill was born in the 1970's as a litter initiative; decades before automated garbage pick-up, high tech sort separation machines in trash facilities, and the expansion of the types of beverages that residents are consuming. Towns have successfully introduced and consumers embraced single stream recycling which is far less expensive and more sanitary to operate.

Reverse vending machines are very costly to rent and take up a lot of space that would otherwise be used to sell groceries. Current reverse vending machines do not handle the multiple sizes and shapes of juice containers and more specifically juice cartons and flexible packaging.

The bottles and cans that come back are filthy and constant sanitation of the bottle rooms and shopping carts are required. It is mind boggling why trash is being brought back to a store that sells fresh, healthy commodities when curbside options are available.

The current handling fee (1.5 cents on beer and 2.0 cents on water and soda) does not cover cost of the redemption process and has never been increased since the bottle law's inception. In fact, my store loses money on every container that I take back.

The expansion to water resulted in higher costs to the retailer from the water manufacturers as they had to recover their costs that they experienced from implementing the container return system. These costs were passed onto the consumer. Sales of bottled water decreased. Expect the same scenario when the bottle bill is further expanded to juice, teas, fruit and sports drinks.

In today's economic climate in the state and the cutback in SNAP benefits, now is not the time to increase a consumer's food bill.

We are good corporate citizens that are concerned about the environment, but we think there is a better more efficient way to accomplish increases in recycling than expansion of the bottle law. We urge you to consider S.B. No. 996 (RAISED) AN ACT ESTABLISHING A BOTTLE RECYCLING FEE IN LIEU OF A REFUNDABLE DEPOSIT as a viable alternative to expansion of the bottle bill. This bill is modeled after the Delaware plan, that repealed the bottle bill a number of years ago and instituted a comprehensive recycling program. Once this plan was implemented, Delaware saw an increase in the recycling rate and relief from the burden on retailers. In tight economic times, it is critically important to find efficiencies to help businesses run more efficiently and effectively.

We ask all of you to consider changing the way we recycle in CT and vote against SB 995 and enact SB 996. Thank you.